

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1–16 (Canceled).

17. (Currently Amended) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by engaging an information terminal that transmits information indicating a start point and a destination for a recommended route to an information distribution center and the information distribution center that obtains, through a route search calculation, route guide information including route information containing nodes representing the recommended route and guide information containing guide point data for the recommended route and transmits the route guide information to the information terminal, the method comprising:

(a) a step in which a user is informed of an estimated download period of time required for downloading the route guide information determined based upon a physical quantity indicating a data size of the route guide information;

(b) a step in which the information terminal transmits a request to the information distribution center to transmit the route guide information in installments;

(c) a step in which upon receiving the request, the information distribution center extracts a portion of the guide information corresponding to an area of the recommended route near the start point and transmits the obtained route information in a batch and the extracted portion of the guide information; and

(d) a step in which upon receiving the extracted portion of the guide information corresponding to the area of the recommended route near the start point, the information terminal starts the route guidance.

18. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

the guide information includes a guidance for advancing direction at each guide point on the recommended route.

19. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 18, wherein:

the portion of the guide information corresponding to the area near the start point includes guide information for a block extending from the start point to a next guide point.

20. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

the data size of the route guide information is a data size of the guide information or a number of guide points contained in the guide information.

21. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

after starting the route guidance, the information terminal transmits to the information distribution center a request for remaining guide information, and

the information distribution center extracts and transmits the remaining portion of the guide information.

22. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 21, wherein:

each time the request for the remaining portion of the guide information is received, the information distribution center transmits guide information extracted in a unit corresponding to a guide point to the information terminal.

Claims 23-24 (Canceled).

25. (Currently Amended) A route guidance method for providing route guidance by exchanging information related to a recommended route from a start point to a destination between an information terminal and an information distribution center, comprising:

(a) a step in which the information terminal transmits information indicating the start point and the destination to the information distribution center;

(b) a step in which the information distribution center obtains route guide information including route information containing nodes representing the recommended route and guide information guide point data for the recommended route through a route search calculation;

(c) a step in which the information distribution center extracts a first piece of the guide information for an area of the recommended route near the start point and a second piece of the guide information for a remaining area of the recommended route and transmits to the information terminal the route information in a batch and the first and second pieces of the guide information separately; and

(d) a step in which the information terminal starts the route guidance upon receiving from the information distribution center the route information and the first piece of the guide information.

26. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

the guide information includes a guidance for advancing direction at each guide point on the recommended route.

27. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

the first piece of the guide information includes at least a guidance for advancing direction at a next guide point to the start point.

28. (Currently Amended) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein

the information distribution center extracts the first piece of the guide information upon receiving a request for splitting transmission of the route guide information from the information terminal, the request being issued based on an intention of a user who is informed of an estimated ~~download~~ period of time required for downloading the route guide information determined based on a physical quantity indicating a data size of the guide information or a number of guide points contained in the guide information.

29. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

after starting the route guidance, the information terminal transmits to the information distribution center a request for the second piece of the guide information.

30. (Previously Presented) A route guidance method according to claim 29, wherein:

each time the request for the second piece of the guide information is received, the information distribution center transmits the second piece of guide information extracted in a unit corresponding to a guide point to the information terminal.

Claims 31-32 (Canceled).

33. (New) A route guidance method according to claim 17, wherein:

the guide point data includes at least one of enlarged map data and audio data.

34. (New) A route guidance method according to claim 25, wherein:

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the guide point data includes at least one of enlarged map data and audio data.